

Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1 - 27 (Cancelled)

28. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method for receiving and processing communications according to a value, comprising:

determining whether the communication is associated with a frank, the frank corresponding to a value, wherein the frank is purchased from a franking server maintaining at least one account associated with at least one user;

in response to determining the communication is not associated with a frank, processing the communication according to at least one default rule; otherwise

determining a class to which the frank corresponds;

in response to determining the class to which the frank corresponds, processing the communication according to at least one class-based rule.

29. (Original) The method of claim 28, wherein the step of processing the communication comprises:

determining whether the frank corresponds to a class which is less than a specified minimum class; and

in response to determining the frank corresponds to a class which is less than a specified minimum class, discarding the communication.

30. (Original) The method of claim 29, further comprising the step of, in response to determining the frank corresponds to a class which is not less than a specified minimum class, transmitting the communication from a network node to a recipient system.

31. (Original) The method of claim 30, where the communication is transmitted by way of at least one Internet service provider.

32. (Original) The method of claim 28, wherein the step of processing the communication comprises:

determining whether the frank corresponds to a class which is greater than a specified minimum class; and

in response to determining the frank corresponds to a class which is greater than a specified minimum class, discarding the communication.

33. (Original) The method of claim 28, wherein the step of processing the communication according to at least one class-based rule further comprises:

determining whether the class is less than a specified minimum class; and

in response to determining the class is less than a specified minimum service class, delaying delivery of the communication.

34. (Original) The method of claim 28, wherein the step of processing the communication according to at least one class-based rule comprises:

determining whether the class is less than a specified minimum class; and

in response to determining the class is less than a specified minimum class, placing the communication in a recipient-specified location.

35. (Original) The method of claim 28, wherein the step of processing the communication comprises:

determining whether the frank corresponds to a class greater than or equal to a specified minimum class; and

in response to determining the frank corresponds to a class greater than or equal to a specified minimum class, displaying at least a portion of the communication in a specified color.

36. (Original) The method of claim 28, further comprising:

determining whether a characteristic of a sender of the communication matches at least one entry on an approved list; and

in response to determining the characteristic of the sender matches at least one entry on the approved list, ignoring the step of processing the communication according to at least one class-based rule.

37. (Original) The method of claim 36, wherein the characteristic of the sender is one of an electronic mail address, a name, or an Internet protocol address.

38. (Original) The method of claim 28, further comprising:
determining whether a characteristic of a sender of the communication matches at least one entry on an approved list; and

in response to determining the characteristic of the sender matches at least one entry on the approved list, assigning a second class to the communication.

39. (Original) The method of claim 38, wherein the step of processing the communication according to at least one class-based rule comprises applying the class-based rule to the higher class of the class and the second class.

40. (Original) The method of claim 34, wherein the communication is an electronic mail.

41. (Original) The method of claim 34, wherein the communication is a telephone call.

42. (Original) The method of claim 34, further comprising:
receiving a second communication;
determining whether the second communication includes a second frank;
in response to determining the second communication does include a second frank, determining a second class to which the frank corresponds; and
determining a display order for the first and second communications, the display order based on the first class and the second class.

43. (Original) A computer-readable medium containing computer-executable instructions which, when executed, perform the method of claim 28.

44. (Previously Presented) A computer-readable medium containing computer-executable instructions which, when accessed, performs the method of claim 39.

45. (Withdrawn) A frank for an electronic communication, comprising:
an electronic communication handling instruction; and
an indication of a class associated with a predetermined value, the predetermined value based on the electronic communication handling instruction.

46. (Withdrawn) The frank of claim 45, wherein the electronic communication handling instruction comprises a transmission priority.

47. (Withdrawn) The frank of claim 46, wherein the electronic communication handling instruction comprises a valid transmission time frame bounded by a first transmission time indicating an earliest permitted time of transmission, and a last transmission time indicating a latest time of transmission.

48. (Withdrawn) The frank of claim 45, wherein the electronic communication handling instruction comprises a network transmission route.

49. (Withdrawn) The frank of claim 45, wherein the electronic communication handling instruction comprises a transmission time delay.

50. (Withdrawn) The frank of claim 45, wherein the electronic communication handling instruction comprises a maximum communication size.

51. (Withdrawn) The frank of claim 45, wherein the electronic communication handling instruction comprises a device priority.

52. (Withdrawn) The frank of claim 45, wherein the electronic communication handling instruction comprises an economic value to be credited to an account associated with a recipient.

53. (Withdrawn) A frank for an electronic communication, comprising:
a maximum communication size;
a device priority; and
an indication of a class associated with a predetermined value, the predetermined value based on a combination of the maximum communication size and the device priority.

54. (Withdrawn) A frank for an electronic communication, comprising:
a transmission priority;

a valid transmission time frame characterized by a first transmission time indicating an earliest permitted time of transmission; and

an indication of a class associated with a predetermined value, the predetermined value based on a combination of the transmission priority and valid transmission time frame.

55. (Withdrawn) A frank for an electronic communication, comprising:
an economic value to be credited to an account associated with a recipient;
a transmission priority; and
an indication of a class associated with a predetermined value, the predetermined value based on a combination of the transmission priority and economic value to be credited to an account associated with a recipient.

56. (Withdrawn) A method for sharing revenue across a network, comprising:
associating an economic value with one of a plurality of pre-defined franks;
associating the pre-defined frank with a communication;
transmitting the communication across a network to a recipient system;
in response to satisfying a receipt condition, transferring a portion of the economic value to the recipient.

57. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 56, wherein the step of associating an economic value with one of a plurality of pre-defined franks comprises:
choosing one of the plurality of pre-defined franks, each of the plurality of pre-defined franks comprising a set fee and an indicia; and
paying the set fee.

58. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 57, wherein the step of associating the pre-defined frank with a communication comprises:
relating the indicia to the communication; and

instructing, via the indicia, the recipient system regarding the processing of the communication.

59. (Cancelled)

60. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 58, further comprising the steps of:
during transmitting the communication across a network, receiving the communication at a network node; and

in response to receiving the communication at a network node, transferring a second portion of the economic value to an account associated with the network node.

61. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 60, wherein the network node is an Internet service provider.

62. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 61, wherein the network node is an Internet service provider associated with the recipient.

63. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 57, wherein the portion of the economic value is the entirety of the whole of the economic value.

64. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 56, further comprising the step of in response to not satisfying a receipt condition, transferring a portion of the economic value to a sender of the communication.

65. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 56, wherein the receipt condition comprises accessing the communication; and

wherein the step of transferring a portion of the economic value to the recipient comprises:

acknowledging to a third party accessing the communication;

transferring, via the third party, the portion of the economic value from an account associated with a sender of the communication to an account associated with the recipient.

66. (Withdrawn) A computer-readable medium containing instructions which, when executed, perform the method of claim 57.

67. (New) A computer-implemented method for receiving and processing communications according to a value, comprising:

determining whether the communication is associated with a frank, the frank corresponding to a value;

in response to determining the communication is not associated with a frank, processing the communication according to at least one default rule; otherwise

determining a class to which the frank corresponds, wherein the class is indicative of a communication handling instruction, the communication handling instruction chosen from a group comprising: a secure transmission instruction; a size-based instruction; an auto-forward permission; a security-based instruction; and a viewing certification;

in response to determining the class to which the frank corresponds, processing the communication according to at least one class-based rule.